

Message Text

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ACTION CU-05

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AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BERLIN 07158

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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S CALL ON MINISTER OF CULTURE

REF: BERLIN 7140

SUMMARY: IN MY CALL ON THE MINISTER OF CULTURE, DURING WHICH HE SPOKE OF HOPES FOR A GREATER CULTURAL EXCHANGE, I OUTLINED OUR DISADVANTAGE IN THE PRESENT STATE OF CULTURAL RELATIONS WHEREIN THE GDR HAD PROGRAMMED SEVERAL ATTRACTIONS WHILE THE US HAD YET TO REALIZE ONE OF ITS FOUR PROPOSED PROGRAMS IN THE CULTURAL PLAN. HOFFMANN ATTRIBUTED ANY PROBLEMS TO TECHNICAL DIFFICULTIES AND NOT TO ANYTHING OF A POLITICAL NATURE AND SAID HE WOULD RESPOND SOON TO OUR REQUEST FOR SPECIFIC SITES AND DATES FOR THE FILM RETROSPECTIVE AND THE STRAND EXHIBIT. WE BOTH AGREED THAT THE EXPERIENCE IN RESOLVING THESE PROBLEMS AND THE CO-OPERATION NECESSARY TO REALIZING THE PROGRAMS WOULD BE CONTRIBUTING FACTORS TOWARD A CULTURAL AGREEMENT. END SUMMARY.

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1. DURING AN INITIAL CALL SEPT. 7 ON MINISTER OF CULTURE HANS-JOACHIM HOFFMANN, WE DISCUSSED PAST AND PRESENT BILATERAL CULTURAL RELATIONS AND THE NEED FOR AN IMPROVEMENT IN THE AMERICAN CULTURAL PRESENCE IN THE GDR. THE 45-MINUTE VISIT WAS ATTENDED ALSO BY DR. HELMUT TAUTZ, MIN-CULT'S CHIEF OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS, AND PAO ALEXANDER.

2. HOFFMANN APPEARED IN EXCELLENT SPIRITS AND WAS VERY WARM IN HIS OPENING REMARKS, STRESSING THAT MY PRESENCE IN THE GDR GAVE NEW IMPETUS TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF CULTURAL RELATIONS BETWEEN OUR TWO COUNTRIES. HE DESCRIBED THE GDR AS A CULTURALLY NOT UNDER-DEVELOPED COUNTRY AND HOPED THAT I COULD SAVOR THE RICH TREASURES AVAILABLE IN OTHER CITIES SUCH AS DRESDEN AND ROSTOCK. I RESPONDED THAT THE CULTURAL LIFE OF THE GDR, ESPECIALLY ITS MUSEUMS, MUSIC AND THEATRE, WERE KNOWN TO ME AND THAT I LOOKED FORWARD TO EXPERIENCING ALL OF THESE. HOFFMANN THEN EXPRESSED SATISFACTION THAT THE DRESDEN ART EXHIBITION, WHILE STILL IN THE NEGOTIATING STAGE, WAS NEVERTHELESS PROCEEDING WITH A VIEW TO REALIZATION NEXT YEAR. HE SAID THAT NO MAJOR PROBLEMS WERE FORESEEN AND THAT ALTHOUGH THE EXHIBIT WAS BEING ARRANGED PRIVATELY BETWEEN THE MUSEUMS ON BOTH SIDES, IT WAS CLEAR THAT WITHOUT GOVERNMENTAL SUPPORT IT WOULD FACE DIFFICULTIES. HE STRESSED THAT THIS EXHIBIT WAS MASSIVE AND THE LARGEST EVER SENT OUT OF THE GDR, AND EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT I WOULD LEND MY SUPPORT.

3. I RESPONDED THAT THE DRESDEN ART EXHIBIT OF COURSE HAD MY FULL SUPPORT. CHAIRMAN HONECKER HAD MENTIONED THE COST THE GDR WAS INCURRING TO SEND THIS MAJOR EXHIBIT TO THREE MUSEUMS INCLUDING THE NATIONAL ART GALLERY IN WASHINGTON. I TOLD HOFFMANN THAT THE AMERICAN PEOPLE WOULD HAVE A COMPREHENSIVE VIEW OF GERMAN CULTURAL HISTORY FROM THE

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DRESDEN EXHIBIT. I CONTINUED, IT WOULD BE IMPORTANT FOR THE PEOPLE OF THE GDR TO SEE A COMPARABLE AMERICAN EXHIBIT. J. CARTER BROWN, DIRECTOR OF THE NATIONAL GALLERY HAD ALREADY CONVEYED THE WILLINGNESS OF ALL THREE PARTICIPATING MUSEUMS TO MOUNT A SIMILAR EXHIBIT IN THE GDR.

4. HOFFMANN AGREED FULLY AND SAID AN AMERICAN EXHIBIT WOULD BE WELCOME, ESPECIALLY BECAUSE SO MUCH THAT WAS KNOWN OF AMERICAN CULTURE WAS OF A SUPERFICIAL NATURE, SUCH AS HIT-SONGS AND JAZZ WHICH THE GDR PUBLIC GOT FROM WESTERN TELEVISION (SIC). MORE IN-DEPTH CULTURAL PROGRAMS WERE NEEDED, MORE BOOKS, FILMS, THEATRE AND OTHER ASPECTS OF AMERICAN CULTURE, AND WHILE THESE REPRESENTED COMMERCIAL CULTURAL RELATIONS, THEY MADE A CONTRIBUTION TOO. HOFFMANN SAID HE LOOKED TO SUGGESTIONS FROM ME FOR MORE CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE AND DRAMA FOR IMPORTATION IN THE GDR, POINTING OUT THAT WHILE AMERICAN THEATRE WAS NOT LACKING IN THE GDR, IT WAS NOT SUFFICIENTLY MODERN AND PROPOSALS FOR MORE UP-TO-DATE WORKS, EVEN IF CONTROVERSIAL IN THE US, WOULD BE WELCOMED.

5. HOFFMANN SAID THAT THE GDR CONCERT AGENCY WAS RE-

SPONSIBLE FOR MANY OF THE CULTURAL, ESPECIALLY MUSICAL, ATTRACTIONS WHICH WERE SENT TO THE UNITED STATES, WHICH WERE ALSO COMMERCIALY ARRANGED, BUT THAT STATE-SUPPORTED PROGRAMS SUCH AS THE AMERICAN FILM RETROSPECTIVE WERE IMPORTANT IN DEVELOPING EXPERIENCE IN OUR CULTURAL RELATIONS. HE NOTED THAT THERE WAS MUCH TO CATCH UP WITH AND THAT THREE YEARS WERE NOT ENOUGH TIME TO OVERTAKE THE LAST TWENTY-FIVE, BUT THAT US-GDR CULTURAL TIES WENT MUCH FURTHER BACK THAN THE PERIOD OF RECOGNITION. IN ANY EVENT,

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HE SAID, WHEN BOTH COUNTRIES DECIDE TO NEGOTIATE A CULTURAL AGREEMENT, PROBLEMS MIGHT BE BETTER RESOLVED.

6. I THANKED HOFFMANN FOR HIS COMPREHENSIVE PRESENTATION AND HIS GOOD WISHES, AND THEN REVIEWED THE STATUS OF CULTURAL PRESENCE IN BOTH COUNTRIES. IN THE UNITED STATES, THE LEIPZIGER GEWANDHAUS ORCHESTRA HAD MADE A TWENTY-CITY TOUR TWO YEARS AGO, THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART HAD PROGRAMMED A WEEK OF GDR FILMS, MANY GDR CONDUCTORS, ARTISTS AND SOLOISTS HAD APPEARED IN CONCERT. I UNDERSTOOD THAT THE DRESDENER STAATSKAPELLE WAS ABOUT TO UNDERTAKE AN EXTENSIVE TOUR LATER THIS YEAR. IN CONTRAST, THE UNITED STATES HAD BEEN ABLE TO DO VIRTUALLY NOTHING IN THE GDR, EVEN THOUGH LATE LAST YEAR WE PROPOSED A CULTURAL PLAN FOR 1977 WHICH CONSISTED OF FOUR PROGRAMS: AN AMERICAN FILM RETROSPECTIVE, A LITERARY SEMINAR, A MUSICAL GROUP, AND THE PAUL STRAND PHOTOGRAPHIC EXHIBIT. TO DATE, NONE OF THESE HAD

BEEN REALIZED, WITH ONLY THE WITHDRAWAL OF POET JAMES DICKY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ABSENCE OF THE SEMINAR. I STRESSED THAT WE HAD PROVIDED THE FOREIGN MINISTRY WITH A CONFIDENTIAL

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LIST OF FIFTEEN TITLES OF AMERICAN FILMS IN GERMAN SYNCHRONIZATION IN EARLY JULY AND REQUESTED A THEATRE AND DATES, BUT WITH NO REPLY TO DATE. LIKEWISE, WE WERE WAITING FOR A MUSEUM AND DATES TO EXHIBIT THE PAUL STRAND PHOTOGRAPHS, AN OUTSTANDING EXHIBIT WHICH, WE JUST WERE INFORMED, THE CONTROLLING PHILADELPHIA MUSEUM OF ART CAN MAKE AVAILABLE FROM FEBRUARY TO MAY OF 1978. WE LOOKED TO AN EARLY RESOLUTION OF THESE TWO MATTERS, AND ARE GRATIFIED THAT THE COMPOSERS STRING QUARTET HAS BEEN ACCEPTED BY THE GDR, EVEN IF NOT FOR THIS YEAR BUT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE 1978 BERLINER FESTTAGE.

7. I EMPHASIZED THAT RESOLVING THESE PROBLEMS WOULD PROVIDE THE PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE NECESSARY TO WORKING OUT A CULTURAL AGREEMENT AND THAT COOPERATION WAS IMPORTANT FROM BOTH SIDES. I SAID ALSO THAT WE SHOULD CONSIDER EXCHANGES IN A MUCH BROADER SENSE, TO INCLUDE SPORTS AND SCIENCE AND THE LIKE. BOTH HOFFMANN AND TAUTZ TOOK NOTES DURING MY PRESENTATION, FOLLOWING WHICH THE MINISTER PROMISED THAT HE WOULD LOOK INTO THE QUESTION OF THE FILM RETROSPECTIVE AND THE STRAND EXHIBIT AND REPLY SOON, ASSURING ME THAT THE REASONS FOR THE DELAYS WERE NOT POLITICAL BUT OF A TECHNICAL NATURE. I REPLIED THAT THE SAME POINT HAD BEEN MADE TO ME BY DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER GRUNERT, WHO INCIDENTALLY HAD THOUGHT THAT THE STRAND EXHIBIT HAD ALREADY TAKEN PLACE.

8. IN WHAT SEEMED A NON-SEQUITUR, HOFFMANN THEN SPOKE OF HARD CURRENCY PROBLEMS AND SAID THAT THE GREAT DISTANCE BETWEEN THE GDR AND THE US CREATED DIFFICULTIES IN TRAVEL AND TRANSPORTATION COSTS, AND THAT JUST AS PRESIDENT CARTER AND THE LEADERS OF OTHER WESTERN COUNTRIES HAD TO WORRY ABOUT MONETARY PROBLEMS, THE GDR, NOT A RICH COUNTRY, CONFIDENTIAL

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HAD TO SPEND ITS MONEY WISELY FOR COST-EFFECTIVENESS. CONCLUDING, HOFFMANN OFFERED, AS HE HAD AT THE BEGINNING, ANY ASSISTANCE TO ME IN TRAVELLING AND ENAJCPAJG THE CULTURAL LIFE OF THE GDR AND WHEN I MENTIONED THAT MY WIFE AND I LOOKED FORWARD TO EXPERIENCING SOME OF THESE CULTURAL TREASURES, AND THAT SHE IS A PAINTER, HOFFMANN

URGED US TO VISIT THE DRESDEN ART SHOW ON OCTOBER 1 WHICH
TAKES PLACE ONLY ONCE EVERY FOUR YEARS AND EXHIBITS GDR
PAINTERS FROM ALL OVER THE COUNTRY. THE MEETING ENDED AS
CORDIALLY AS IT HAD BEGUN. BOLEN

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